

# FEDERAL NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED



## DOE WINS POPULAR SCIENCE "BEST OF WHAT'S NEW" AWARDS

■(WASHINGTON) Flexible solar electric shingles, a desert tower that stores the sun's energy, an inexpensive device to disinfect water, and a new aerosol-based technology for sealing air leaks in heating, cooling, and ventilation (HVAC) ducts — all developed with support from the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy — are winners of *Popular Science* magazine's "Best of What's New" awards for 1996. The Grand Award in Environmental Technology went to the solar shingles.

The solar electric shingle roofing modules were developed by United Solar Systems Corp., in collaboration with Energy Conversion Devices Inc., both of Troy, Mich. They are solar electric modules, resembling conventional asphalt roofing shingles, that are composed of amorphous silicon photovoltaic (PV) cells deposited on flexible stainless steel. These overlapping shingles replace ordinary architectural roofing materials. The modules can produce 5-6 watts AC/square foot peak power in full sun conditions and produce approximately 25 watt-hours/square foot on average for daily energy output.

Solar Two is the world's most technically advanced solar power plant. It uses an innovative molten salt technology to capture and store the sun's energy — a technology vastly different from other solar technologies because it allows the practical storage of solar energy, generating electricity when needed, including at night and in bad weather. Located in California's Mojave Desert, Solar Two uses 1,926 heliostats (mirrors) in a circular formation around a 300-foot tower. The mirrors track the sun's path, focusing sunlight onto a central receiver to generate a clean, inexhaustible supply of energy. Solar Two is a joint effort of DOE and a consortium of electric utilities and high tech companies led by Southern California Edison.

Scientist Ashok Gadgil of DOE's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL) in Berkeley, Calif., was cited for his development of UV Waterworks. This inexpensive device uses ultraviolet light to cheaply disinfect water from the viruses and bacteria that every year kill millions of people in developing nations. The UV Waterworks is a purification system that uses an off-the-shelf ultraviolet light to kill bacterial and viral contaminants. Running on a

car battery if necessary, one unit can provide water for a village of 1,000 people. Each unit should cost between \$250 and \$600.

A new aerosol-based technology for sealing air leaks in HVAC ducts was developed by LBNL scientist Mark Modera. In typical homes, sealing these leaks can reduce heating and cooling energy costs from 15 to 30 percent. Using Modera's system, grilles are temporarily sealed, aerosolized adhesive particles are blown into the duct system and flow to the leakage sites, creating a sealant. The research to develop aerosol sealing was supported as well by the California Institute for Energy Efficiency, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Electric Power Research Institute.

Each year, the editors of *Popular Science* magazine review thousands of new products, technology developments, and scientific achievements to select 100 for distinction as the "Best of What's New." This year's winners were announced at an awards event last week in New York City. A 24-page special editorial section highlighting the award winners is the cover story for the December 1996 issue of *Popular Science*. This year the "Best of What's New" will also extend to millions of computer users on the Internet's World Wide Web. These viewers will choose from the 100 winners for the Reader's Choice Award, to be announced on January 3, 1997.

—U.S. DEPT. OF ENERGY  
11/19/96

## BUSINESS & LABOR

### PROPOSAL ALLOWS CONVERSION OF PLAN INVESTMENTS TO MUTUAL FUNDS

■(WASHINGTON) Employee benefit plans could save millions of dollars in brokerage fees under a U.S. Labor Department proposal that would allow the transfer of benefit funds from bank investments to bank-affiliated no-load mutual funds, a transaction currently prohibited except through exemption from the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA).

The department's proposed exemption would allow federal or state banks to convert collective funds into mutual funds if:

- ✓ the bank discloses information about the mutual fund and the conversion process, including why the exchange of investments is appropriate for the plan;

- ✓ an independent plan fiduciary gives the bank advance written authorization for each transfer of CIF assets in exchange for shares of a mutual fund;

- ✓ plan clients pay no commissions or other fees in connection with the purchase of mutual fund shares;

- ✓ written confirmation is provided to the independent plan fiduciary within 105 days of the transactions;

- ✓ within 30 days information is furnished which discloses the identity of each security not listed on a national exchange or NASDAQ and the identity of the pricing service or market-maker contacted to determine the value of such securities;

- ✓ combined total fees received by a bank from a client plan for services received cannot exceed reasonable compensation;

- ✓ the value of mutual fund shares received by a plan equals the current market value of its pro-rata share of assets in the CIF on the date of the exchange; and

- ✓ the independent plan fiduciary receives ongoing disclosure of information such as an updated prospectus and a report or statement of fees paid to the bank.

The proposed exemption is in the Nov. 13 Federal Register or via the Internet at <http://www.dol.gov/dol/pwba> after Nov 20. Public comments or requests for a hearing should be submitted in writing to the Office of Exemption Determinations, Pension and Welfare Benefits Administration, Room N-5649, 200 Constitution Avenue N.W., Washington, DC 20210, (Attention: "CIF Conversion Class Exemption").

—U.S. DEPT. OF LABOR  
11/18/96

### WORKING WOMEN COUNT!

■(WASHINGTON) Working women across the United States believe their pay and benefits should provide economic security, the workplace culture should support and respect families and that opportunities should reflect the value of women's work, according to a survey conducted by the Women's Bureau.

The Working Women Count! survey also reports that health and pension benefits are crucial issues to American women.

The survey included a popular questionnaire distributed to the public in all 50 states, the Virgin Islands, Guam and Puerto Rico. The Bureau also conducted a telephone survey with a scientifically selected, national

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